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ABSTRACT

Beginning with a brief history of homeschooling in America, this paper discusses literature describing today's population of homeschoolers. Although older, the binary typology offered by Van Galen (1987, 1991) to categorize the motivations of homeschoolers is still utilized in much of the homeschooling literature. Van Galen breaks homeschoolers into two basic groups: the ideologues, who have ideological conflicts with schools, and the pedagogues, who dislike the pedagogy employed in traditional forms of education. Using Van Galen's rubric as a starting point, the paper considers existing research about the characteristics and motivations of homeschoolers. Although this extant research is quite limited, it nonetheless highlights the need for an expanded framework. To this end, the paper offers suggestion for a slightly more detailed typology, arising from the author's research of homeschooling. The paper concludes with a brief sampling of the types of knowledge and insight that homeschooling research may offer concerning the strengths, weaknesses, and future of American schooling. (Contains 90 references.) (Author)

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Understudied Education: Toward Building a Homeschooling Research Agenda. Occasional Paper No. 48.

Kariane Mari Welner

June 2002

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Occasional Paper No. 48

National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education

Teachers College, Columbia University

UNDERSTUDIED EDUCATION: TOWARD BUILDING A HOMESCHOOLING RESEARCH AGENDA

June 2002

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Abstract Beginning with a brief history of homeschooling in America, I discuss literature describing today's population of homeschoolers. Although older, the binary typology offered by Van Galen (1987, 1991) to categorize the motivations of homeschoolers is still utilized in much of the homeschooling literature. She breaks homeschoolers into two basic groups: the ideologues, who have ideological conflicts with schools, and the pedagogues, who dislike the pedagogy employed in traditional forms of education. Using Van Galen's rubric as a starting point, I consider existing research about the characteristics and motivations of homeschoolers. Although this extant research is quite limited, it nonetheless highlights the need for an expanded framework. To this end, I offer my own suggestions for a slightly more detailed typology, arising out of my own homeschooling research. I conclude with a brief sampling of the types of knowledge and insight that homeschooling research may offer concerning the strengths, weakness, and future of American schooling.

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Introduction

When educational researchers describe schooling in the United States, we tend to focus primarily on public schools. Religious and secular private schools also receive considerable attention in the research literature, either standing alone or comparing them with their public counterparts. In addition, many educational researchers have recently given thoughtful attention to various market-based hybrid policies, such as vouchers and charter schools. Noticeably missing from this research mosaic, however, is a segment of American schooling that has captured the nation's popular attention: homeschooling.

In the last couple of years, the mainstream press has provided extensive coverage of this phenomenon, noting in particular its prodigious growth. In contrast, the diverse AERA Annual Meeting has painted homeschooling as a minuscule speck on the educational landscape. Further, the issue has been similarly absent from education's preeminent research journals.

While our research community has focused elsewhere, the number of American homeschoolers[1] has increased dramatically. Between 1994 and 1999, homeschooled students increased threefold, from approximately 400,000 to approximately 1.2 million. This puts the number of homeschooled students well over the total of those enrolled in charter schools or voucher programs. As a point of comparison, the charter-school advocacy group, the Center for Education Reform, claims that 1,682 charter schools, serving 350,000 children, were open during the 1999-2000 school year (Center for Education Reform, 1999). Homeschooling is now a widespread, diverse, and important segment of education in America.

In pursuit of a comprehensive knowledge of national education, therefore, we need to direct more attention to understanding the education of homeschooled children. Moreover, such studies will generate a wealth of information applicable to broader educational settings. Scholars interested in cognitive development may gain important insights from unschooling families, who tenaciously pursue child-led learning (see Holt, 1981). Scholars concerned with curriculum may gain important insights from the many homeschoolers who devote themselves to tailoring lessons to meet the individual needs of each of their children. And scholars focused on policy may gain important insights about market-based reforms. Homeschooling, after all, is the ultimate in school choice: not simply *between* schools, but *whether* schools.

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[1] I use the term "homeschooler" to mean a parent who homeschools. When referring to their children, I so specify, using terms such as "homeschooled students."

Beginning with a brief history of homeschooling in America, I move on to discuss literature describing today's population of homeschoolers. Although older, the binary typology offered by Van Galen (1987, 1991) to categorize the motivations of homeschoolers is still utilized in much of the homeschooling literature. She breaks homeschoolers into two basic groups: the ideologues, who have ideological conflicts with schools, and the pedagogues, who dislike the pedagogy employed in traditional forms of education. Using Van Galen's rubric as a starting point, I consider existing research about the characteristics and motivations of homeschoolers. Although this extant research is quite limited[2], it nonetheless highlights the need for an expanded framework. To this end, I offer my own suggestions for a slightly more detailed typology, arising out of my own homeschooling research. I conclude with a brief sampling of the types of knowledge and insight that homeschooling research may offer concerning the strengths, weakness, and future of American schooling.

The Changing Face of Homeschooling

The tradition of parents personally directing their children's education has a deep-rooted history in the United States. In pre-revolutionary years, there existed no state-run public schools or compulsory attendance laws. The first laws regarding education required teaching by parents and by "masters" (e.g., those in charge of training apprentices) but did not provide for schools or teachers (Cremin, 1961). Following the American Revolution, states slowly began to mandate the support and operation of formal schools. In 1852, Massachusetts passed America's first compulsory attendance law (1852 Massachusetts Acts, ch.240, §§ 1,2,4). Other states soon followed, and by 1918, every state had such a statute. Pursuant to these laws, parents faced criminal sanctions if they kept their children at home instead of sending them to a formal school (Arons, 1983; Gorder, 1990; Rakestraw & Rakestraw, 1990).

As states' educational role expanded, the role of parents underwent a corresponding contraction. Significantly, this shift in educational responsibility did not come without tension. It brought about a series of lawsuits (beginning in the 1920s and continuing still) dealing with parents', states', and school districts' respective rights and interests in educational control (e.g., *Meyer v.*

[2] Most of the pre-existing homeschooling research falls into two categories: either quantitative demographic and motivational studies or those aimed at debunking popular misconceptions of homeschooling.

Nebraska, 1923; *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 1925; *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 1972; *Brunelle v. Lynn Public Schools*, 1998).

The shift in educational roles was also intertwined with social conflicts. For many years, homeschooling existed almost exclusively on the fringes of American society. People homeschooled because they were geographically isolated, followed strict religious convictions, or because they traveled, lived, or were stationed abroad. Starting in the 1960s, however, the landscape began to change in response to a variety of compelling critiques of the American system of institutionalized education (Gorder, 1990; Rakestraw & Rakestraw, 1990; see also, Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Illich, 1970; Oakes, 1985). The onset of these critiques coincided with larger demands for change associated with the civil rights, antiwar, and counterculture movements. Many parents decided to place their children in alternative forms of education. For some, this meant educating their children at home.

During this same period of time, the Christian Right began to emerge as a powerful social and political force – condemning what they perceive to be the increasingly secular nature of public schools. For these people, homeschooling has joined education in Christian schools as a favored choice (see Muncy, 1994, see also the web page of the "Christian Home Educators Association of California"). Dr. James Dobson, the widely influential host of the Christian radio program *Focus on the Family*, has devoted many programs to homeschooling; including inviting Dr. Raymond Moore, a prominent Christian homeschooling activist, to speak on his show. Further, some Christian leaders are sponsoring a movement called "Exodus 2000," a project whose stated purpose is "to trump the insidious anti-academic, pro-social control policies of Goals 2000 with the only option available to today's families: the rapid withdrawal of their children and grandchildren from a corrupt public school system" (http://www.exodus2000.org/overview.htm). Exodus 2000 calls for Christians to "leave Pharaoh's schools for the promised land of Christian schools or home-schooling. . . ." (http://www.exodus2000.org/news9809.htm).

Religiously and socially motivated families from the Christian Right, families of other religious persuasions, and an increasing number of families with more secular motivations, have fueled a 30-year-long expansion of homeschooling, accelerating markedly in the last decade. The numbers, while notably imprecise, are startling. In 1991, Patricia Lines conservatively estimated the number of homeschooled children to range from 150,000 to 300,000 (Lines, 1991). In 1998, she approximated the number at 1 million (Lines, 1998). Various researchers and homeschooling organizations estimate that the number of students educated in homeschools increases by fifteen to

twenty-five percent annually (Hawkins, 1996; McDowell & Ray 2000; Lines 2000). If these figures are accurate, homeschooled students now comprise around three to four percent of the total school-age population – approximately 2 million students (McDowell & Ray 2000, Lines 2000). Other estimates, while acknowledging recent growth, give much smaller figures, ranging from 287,000 to 757,000 school-age children – translating to approximately 0.8 to 1.4 percent of children being homeschooled (Henke, Kaufman, Broughman, & Chandler, 2000). Taking a moderate number, 1.2 million, from amongst these estimates, the total number of homeschoolers in the United States now outnumbers the individual statewide public school enrollments in each of at least 39 states (NCES, 1996a).[3] As a point of comparison, the charter-school advocacy group, the Center for Education Reform, claims that 1,682 charter schools, serving 350,000 children, were open during the 1999-2000 school year (Center for Education Reform, 1999).

This brief history reveals that the status of homeschoolers in the United States has undergone monumental shifts over the past couple of centuries. Prior to the widespread development and acceptance of public schools, homeschooling was the societal standard. Later, when the factory model of schooling swept across the country, homeschooling became excluded from this new norm, and truant officers were sent to defiant homes to find children absent from the formal schools. In recent decades, homeschoolers have moved from being resisted, to being grudgingly accepted, to now: knocking on the door of the commonplace.

During this history, the demographics of homeschooling have undergone accompanying changes, fluctuating along with the social meaning attached to the decision. Whereas homeschoolers at one time consisted mainly of those on the periphery of society, today's families who choose to homeschool are surprisingly diverse; the reasons for their choice are as varied as the movement's constituents and ideologies (Bolick, 1987; Knowles, 1988a; Van Galen, 1988; Wahisi, 1995).

Although most homeschoolers remain white and middle-income (Rudner, 1999), the recent upsurge in homeschooling has drawn people from all ethnic and class groups (Knowles, 1988a; Mayberry, 1987; Nazareno, 1999; Wahisi, 1995). Ideologically, parents who homeschool represent a broad cross-section of American society (Knowles, 1988a). While, in its recent resurgence, homeschooling began as a trend among fundamentalist Christians with primarily religious motivations, homeschoolers nowadays may hold conservative values, follow a more leftist tradition, or fall somewhere in between (Bolick, 1987; Knowles, 1988a; Mayberry, 1987; Van Galen, 1988).

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[3] The states that approach or exceed the 1.2 million figure are, in order of enrollment, California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Georgia, New Jersey, and North Carolina.

While we may learn a great deal from measurements of central tendency (e.g., means), which tend to portray homeschoolers as white, middle-income, and religiously conservative, we should not ignore the rich and fascinating range that presently exists among homeschoolers.

This diversity carries over into almost all areas. Some homeschooling parents, for instance, have doctorates, and others never completed high school (Lines, 1987; Mayberry, 1987; Rudner, 1999; Shepherd, 1986). In addition, despite the fact that homeschooling logistics are much more difficult for low-income families than for wealthier ones, the broad range of homeschoolers' socio-economic statuses includes poor and rich, as well as urban and rural. Generally, in order to homeschool, one of the parents must possess the ability to remain at home throughout the day, thus allowing that parent to teach and supervise the children. Michaels (1993) estimates, however, that if a family sends three kids to private school at $10,000 each, eliminating the tuition bill will more than compensate for the loss of an annual $50,000 pretax salary, making it more economical in many cases than private schooling (see also Ray, 1997 and Rosemond, 1999). Such trade-offs, of course, are not part of the calculus for most families; a 1990 survey of Maine homeschoolers revealed that 70% of respondents had an annual pretax income of less than $35,000 (Lyman, 1993).

In addition to financial obstacles, prospective homeschooling parents face challenges involving the substantial workload, not only in the preparation of lessons and curriculum for the child, but also in complying with the legal frameworks and narrow restrictions applicable to homeschools.[4] Notwithstanding these difficulties – and during a time of escalating numbers of single-parent homes and homes with both parents holding outside jobs – the movement has undergone a rapid and continuous increase.

In short, the feasibility of homeschooling is undeniably tied to financial, educational, and temporal resources. Nonetheless, for many families lacking resources in one or more of these areas, the appeal of this option is sufficient to cause them to undertake the challenge.

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[4] A wide, and growing, number of supports do exist for homeschooling parents. Most areas have at least one homeschooling support group, where local homeschoolers gather to share stories, resources, information on state or local requirements, plan field trips, etc. Also, resources abound in bookstores, magazines, newsletters, and on the world wide web.

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Current Omission

During the last decade, homeschooling has grown tremendously both in numbers and diversity. Yet, researchers routinely omit homeschooling from broader discussions of the range of educational alternatives – instead drawing the boundaries of educational discourse around public schools, private schools, or issues of choice within the public school sphere (e.g., magnet schools, charter schools, and between-school choice). Policy analysts examining the broad impact of educational policies also consistently overlook the issue of how such policies will affect this rapidly growing segment of the population. Even when directly focusing on the issues of parental choice, authors only rarely expand this discussion to include an investigation of why parents pursue the homeschooling alternative.

Most educational research in America concentrates on public schools. This emphasis is largely due to the public schools' central role in our system of universal schooling. Moreover, many of us share an interest and concern about the educational opportunities provided to low-income students and to students of color – populations served overwhelmingly by the public schools.[5] These reasons alone justify a decision to place, and to maintain, public schools at the center of the national educational focus.

But I also recognize other, less justifiable causes for educational researchers' oversight of homeschooling. In particular, because homeschoolers have not been included in national databases such as NELS88, High School and Beyond, the International Mathematics and Science Studies (e.g., TIMSS), the Longitudinal Study of American Youth (LSAY), and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), generations of educational statisticians have been structurally frustrated from following any inclination they may otherwise feel to include this population in their analyses. Although several studies have recorded data about specific, limited homeschooled populations, these studies have not, either alone or in combination, yielded reliable, nationwide demographic information.

For instance, a highly-publicized article, billing itself as presenting "the results of the largest survey and testing program for students in home schools to date," was published in the electronic journal *Education Policy Analysis Archives* (Rudner, 1999, p. 1). While offering some interesting analyses of a large database, the population that constituted this database was not representative of

[5] In 1995, 89% (46 million students) of all students attended public schools. Thirty-five percent of these were children of color: African American (17%), Latino (14%), Asian American (4%), or Native American (1%). In contrast, only

the larger homeschooling population. Rather, the data were provided by Bob Jones University, which serves an overwhelmingly white, conservative, Christian population of homeschoolers (see Welner & Welner, 1999).

Qualitative studies fare little better, and their oversight cannot be directly attributed to weaknesses in national statistical databases. (These databases arguably set the parameters of valued knowledge, but only indirectly.) Yet, while limited, the extant literature on homeschooling does provide us with an overview of the current population and some of the issues within it. I present this literature below, weaving it into a discussion of how it relates to my own homeschooling research.

Beyond Ideologues and Pedagogues

Given the limited scholarship in this area combined with the growing importance of homeschooling within American education, there presently exists a great need for a rich and versatile conceptual framework to assist researchers studying and discussing homeschoolers. Earlier researchers have developed frameworks (which are still used within the homeschooling research community) that dichotomize the homeschooling population into, on the one hand, parents who want teach their children a specific set of values and, on the other hand, parents who believe that the pedagogy employed in traditional schools is contrary to the way children best learn (see Lyman, 1998; Van Galen, 1988). Jane Van Galen refers to these two groups as "Ideologues" and "Pedagogues," respectively (Van Galen, 1988). She defines Ideologues as parents who

> ... are teaching their children at home for two reasons: They object to what they believe is being taught in public and private schools and they seek to strengthen their relationships with their children. These parents have specific values, beliefs, and skills that they want their children to learn, and they do not believe that these things are being adequately taught in any available school (p. 55).

In contrast, she describes Pedagogues as parents who

22% of private school students are children of color (NCES, 1996b).

> ... teach their children at home primarily for pedagogical reasons. Their criticisms of the schools are not so much that the schools teach heresy, but that the schools teach whatever they teach ineptly. These parents are highly independent and strive to take responsibility for their own lives. While diverse in other aspects of their lives, they share a respect for their children's intellect and creativity and a belief that children learn best when pedagogy taps into the child's innate desire to learn (p. 55).

To date, Van Galen's binary breakdown has furnished the most useful typology for researchers of homeschooling. Yet, while this rubric helps to provide an initial understanding of homeschoolers, I have found homeschoolers to be multidimensional – rarely fitting cleanly into one or the other category.[6] Consider, for example, my interview with a Pennsylvania homeschooler who, when asked about her motivations, initially seemed a good candidate for the Pedagogue category. She spoke to me at length about the educational advantages of one-on-one teaching and attention, and she criticized traditional schools for insufficiently challenging students. She also decried what she viewed as the negative socialization that occurs within school walls. Yet, she then amplified upon her rationale, adding that she and her husband weave their religious beliefs into their daily lives, including their children's educations. Although her homeschooling decision was primarily pedagogically rooted, she also brought ideological concerns to that homeschooling.

Many parents, such as the mother described above, simply fall in-between the Van Galen dichotomy (Knowles, 1988b). Homeschoolers may begin with pedagogical concerns in addition to objecting to the ideological content of a traditional formal education. Even though Pedagogues may choose home education because they disagree with the teaching methods of traditional schools, they may also believe in the importance of integrating religious beliefs into their children's education.[7] Further, as Knowles (1988b) points out, many Ideologues come to value pedagogical homeschooling benefits.

Other parents may explain their homeschooling decision purely in terms of the importance of pedagogy yet may closely link this pedagogy to their broader ideologies. These parents often

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[6] Other researchers (e.g., Knowles, 1988b) have also found homeschoolers to be multi-dimensional. But this finding has not led to a reconstruction of how homeschoolers are described or discussed. Instead, people continue to talk about homeschoolers in the limiting language of this binary typology.

[7] A study by Florida's Education Department found that "sixty-one percent of parents ranked dissatisfaction with [the] public school environment and instruction as the motivation for homeschooling, topping religion" (Hawkins, 1996, p. 20). We can make an informed conjecture, however, that many of these sixty-one percent had secondary motivations, much like the Pennsylvania mother described in the text, related to their religious beliefs.

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embrace the Deweyan idea that education is not merely preparation for life – education is life. Accordingly, neither "Ideologue" nor "Pedagogue" in isolation adequately describes homeschooling parents; the dichotomy hides a complex picture. This should not be surprising; when Van Galen first proposed this model, the homeschooling population was approximately one-tenth of its present size and much less diverse.

To begin accounting for these multiple dimensions, I suggest transforming the Van Galen rubric from identifiers into descriptors based on parents' self-described motivations – from "Ideologue" to *ideological motivations* and from "Pedagogue" to *pedagogical motivations*. In addition, I would broaden these terms' definitions. As I spoke with parents, I began to think of an ideological motivation for homeschooling as a desire to pass along to one's children a particular ideological view of the world. In contrast, a pedagogical motivation for homeschooling is a desire to educationally prepare one's children in a specific manner, separate and apart from any desire to instill particular views – either pedagogical or ideological – in the children. This pedagogical motivation may itself be kindled by a parent's own values and ideological views but it is not a motivation to pass along those views. While I believe that this new structure provides a useful, rudimentary framework for thinking about different motivations for homeschooling, I also realize that as researchers we cannot, and should not, draw a clear line between pedagogical and ideological motivations. I discuss this limitation in greater detail in the following sections.

Ideological Motivations

I identified many variations and combinations among homeschoolers with ideological motivations. Most ideologically motivated homeschoolers remain Fundamentalist Christian (Ray, 1997; Van Galen, 1988), many of whom view the task of raising their children in the "nurture and admonition of The Lord"[8] as a Biblical command which they would neglect by having someone else educate their children. They assert that they fail to take their God-given responsibility seriously if Biblical truth does not provide the basis for their children's education (see, e.g., Plymouth Rock Foundation, 1991). Because of the continued preponderance of Fundamentalist Christians among ideologically motivated homeschoolers, the religious diversity of this group of parents is frequently

[8] Ephesians 6:4 "And, you fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of The Lord."

overlooked within media and policy discussions of homeschooling. Yet this group also includes, among others, followers of Judaism, Islam, and Paganism, as well as non-fundamentalist Christianity (see the following web pages: "Bnos Henya Project: Jewish Orthodox Homeschooling;" "Al-Madrasah Al-Ula: The Magazine for Muslim Home Schoolers;" and "Pagan Homeschool Page").

Homeschooling allows parents from all of these groups to integrate their particular religious beliefs into their children's educations (Ray, 1997; Rudner, 1999; Van Galen, 1988). Further, the motivations of parents from all these groups can consistently be traced to a desire to have their children receive a "better moral education than they would get in schools" (Hawkins, 1996).[9] They feel that traditional schools, especially public schools, fail to respect their families' values and that these schools oftentimes teach curricula directly oppositional to their strongly-held beliefs (Ray, 1997; Rudner, 1999; Van Galen, 1988). For instance, many Christian homeschoolers fear that their children would be exposed to "secular humanism," "revisionist history," or science classes that (through, e.g., the teaching of evolution) deny the authority of God (Ray, 1997). Many ideologically motivated homeschoolers also seek to shield their children from what they view as inappropriate discussions of drug use, sexual activity, and sexual orientation (see Chiusano, 1995).

Some homeschooling parents also see their choice as a way of combating what they view as inappropriate government intervention (Blumenfeld, 1995). They feel that the government, through the public schools, meddles in private issues, thereby subverting individual family discretion (Blumenfeld, 1995). These parents do not want others to tell them how or with what values they should raise their children. They desire to avoid the "hidden agenda" of the schools, variously describing this agenda as, e.g., "capitalist conformity" or "secular humanism" (Gibbs, 1994, p. 62).

Pedagogical Motivations

The diversity of pedagogical motivations is as great as that of ideological motivations. Certainly, one large group of pedagogically-oriented parents chooses homeschooling to avoid the hegemonic and inequitable facets of traditional schools. Schools, such parents contend, legitimize certain knowledge and cultures while excluding others (Llewellyn, 1996; Van Galen, 1988; see also

[9] Hawkins (1996), like most of the researchers cited in this section, speaks in terms of "religious" homeschoolers, but the vast majority of her subjects were almost surely Christian. The statements and conclusions cited herein should be understood in that context.

Apple, 1982).[10] They also argue that schools perpetuate inequality through practices such as tracking (Franzosa, 1991; Llewellyn, 1996; see also Oakes, 1985).[11] A growing number of African-American and Native American parents are turning to home education to help their children escape the racism, rote instruction, and low expectations found in many formal schools (Llewellyn, 1996; Wahisi, 1995; see also Knowles, 1988a; Welner & Welner, 1999; and the "Native American Homeschool Association Web Site").

In addition, many homeschoolers with pedagogical concerns and views similar to education reformers such as John Holt (1969, 1981, 1982) and Ivan Illich (1970), find dissatisfaction with the entire system of public schooling (Guterson, 1992; Hern, 1996; Knowles, 1988; Mayberry, 1988; Van Galen, 1987). A substantial number of these parents have been strongly influenced by Holt's thinking and refer to themselves as "unschoolers." They often believe, as did he, that schools' "'true social tasks' [are] to shut the young out of society while ranking and sorting them according to discriminatory standards and socializing them into future citizens and employees" (Franzosa, 1991). Many unschoolers choose to homeschool their children because they feel traditional schools fail to encourage independent thinking (Franzosa, 1991) and stifle their children's creativity and growth (Gibbs, 1994, p. 62). Unschooling parents tend to believe that "children should not go to school – either in a school building or in the home. All of life and living are a school and children will learn as they are prompted from within by native curiosity if this has not been damaged by excessive structure" (Common & MacMullen, 1986, p. 5).

Another important motivational factor for a large number of homeschooling parents is their determination that formal schools do not provide quality instruction (Common & MacMullen, 1986; Gibbs, 1994; Lyman, 1998; Mayberry, 1987). Some of these parents contend that traditional schools are geared more for crowd control than education and fail to provide the necessary level of individual attention (Guterson, 1992; Hern, 1996; Lyman, 1998; Van Galen, 1988). Others dislike the way traditional schools control their time and the time of their children (Guterson, 1992; Hern, 1996). Further, financial problems faced by many school districts have lead some homeschooling parents to worry about declines in educational quality (Knowles, 1988).

A growing number of parents with special-needs children have similarly concluded that the

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[10] I chose to discuss this motivation (concern with the hegemonic aspects of traditional schools) as pedagogical. However, I could easily have discussed it above, as ideological.

[11] Citations to these influential authors should not be understood as implying that they advocate homeschooling. To the contrary, Michael Apple and Jeannie Oakes are particularly strong advocates of addressing inequities within an improved public educational system.

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services rendered in formal schools do not adequately serve their families (Hensley, 1995; Reinhiller & Thomas, 1996). For instance, parents of children with mental or physical disabilities sometimes decide that their children can receive a better education at home (see O'Grady, 1996, discussing Tourette's Syndrome). Likewise, some homeschooling parents feel that their children's academic gifts are not adequately respected and nurtured in traditional schools (Kantrowitz, 1994).

Instructional Diversity

One additional blurring of the proposed line separating Ideologues and Pedagogues concerns their instructional methods. Both ideologically and pedagogically motivated homeschoolers employ a great diversity of instructional approaches, and this diversity calls into question the formerly-held belief that the vast majority of Ideologues stick to conventional schooling techniques and materials (see Van Galen, 1988).

For example, some homeschooling parents use formal lesson plans, while others allow the child to set the pace – even if it means waiting a long time before the child expresses interest in a particular topic (Ray, 1997; Wartes, 1988). Many parents design their own curriculum, expressly tailoring it to their beliefs and their children's perceived needs (Harris, 1988; Ray, 1997). Other homeschoolers enroll their children in correspondence schools or buy set curricula. In addition, while some parents opt for no training outside the home, others enroll their children in part-time classes at a college campus or institutionalized school (public or private), hire tutors, or participate in programs formed specifically to meet the needs of homeschoolers in specific content areas (Harris, 1988; Kennedy, 1995; Lyman, 1993).

Even the age at which parents begin to teach their children varies among homeschooling families. Some parents begin to formally teach their children as early as three years of age (Richman & Richman, 1988). Others begin formal educational training when their children reach eight to twelve years of age (Moore, 1985). The impressive variety of pedagogical approaches employed by today's homeschooling parents cross any Ideologue/Pedagogue boundary.

My Homeschooling Classification Model

Depending upon how finely one draws the distinctions, the above discussion – which is by no means comprehensive – presents dozens of different ideological and pedagogical motivations for homeschooling. When played out in their various idiosyncratic permutations, these motivations result in countless unique but still potentially useful categories. The two categories (or motivations) presented here are simply place keepers that I found useful in my thinking about homeschoolers and their motivations. Moreover, as highlighted by the above discussion, many parents aggregate motivations and blur any concrete lines that I may try to draw. Accordingly, the following represents a tentative classification scheme in order to promote awareness of and to initiate discussion about homeschoolers amongst the research community as well as to provide a foundation and a common language for this discussion.

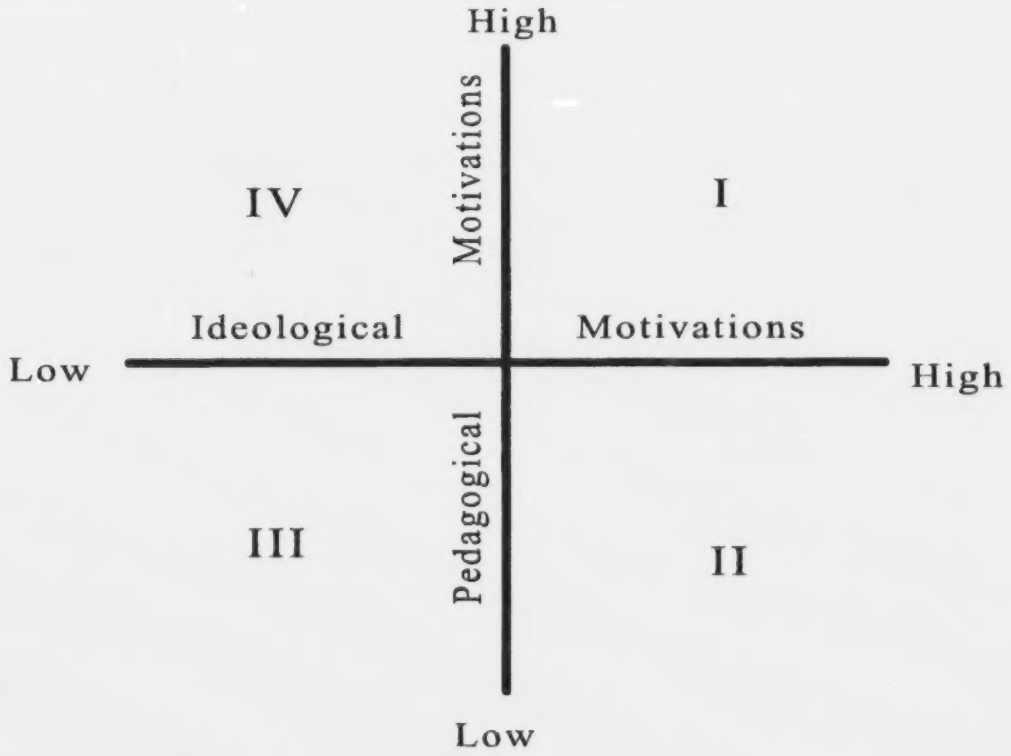
Since the binary typology fails to take into account the substantial overlap between Ideologues and Pedagogues, I propose a model that expands on Van Galen's two basic categorizations. This model allows parents' motivations to be placed on intersecting ideological and pedagogical scales. Each scale exists on a continuum, as a range between "low" (not important) and "high" (very important).

Figure 1 represents one model of how these two scales could interact. A parent who has both highly pedagogical and highly ideological motivations will be placed in quadrant one. Those who decide to homeschool because of strong ideology, but who have little pedagogical motivation fall in quadrant two. Also (skipping over quadrant three for a moment), those who dislike the pedagogy of traditional schools but have little ideological motivation for homeschooling fall in quadrant four.

Finally, homeschoolers who have little pedagogical or ideological motivation fall into quadrant three. This third quadrant contains, among others, those homeschoolers causing the most vocal apprehension from people outside the homeschooling movement. Educators and educational

Figure 1

Classification of Homeschoolers



policy makers often express concern about parents keeping their kids at home but not helping them learn academically worthwhile skills or knowledge. Such homeschoolers may be parents who essentially allow their children to "drop out" early under the guise of homeschooling. Alternatively (or in addition), they may have a strong desire for their children's company. They may seek their children's assistance with household, business, or farm chores. Or they may be parents who simply place little or no importance on academics.

Also falling within the third quadrant, however, are those parents who are best described as having concerns about the conditions and influences surrounding their children's educations. In many low-income, inner-city neighborhoods, homeschooling provides parents with a means to shield their children from drug and gang problems in their local schools (Blumenfeld, 1995; Gibbs, 1994). Similarly, some parents homeschool in order to avoid such school-related detriments as peer pressure, antisocial influences, and sexual discrimination (Gorder, 1990; Mayberry, 1998; Ray, 1997). These third-quadrant homeschoolers may have pedagogical and/or ideological motivations, but their primary motivation is better characterized as environmental. In fact, a third, "Environmental Motivations," dimension would enhance the above model.

In addition, located in this third quadrant would be those parents who have logistical and practical reasons for their decision. Traditional schools may not fit in with the general structure of their family life. Greene (1984), in his study of children enrolled in the Alaskan Centralized Correspondence Study Program, found that the parents who enrolled in this program generally lived a great distance from a school, traveled throughout the year, desired to integrate practical life skills with schooling, or simply felt that homeschooling integrated well with their self-sufficient lifestyle.

My preliminary, two-dimensional model admittedly fails to take many of these motivations into account. Factors such as parents' desire to spend more time with their children, a desire to pass on certain cultural capital, and so forth should be worked into future models. Also important for a method of classification, a factor not accounted for in Van Galen's ideologue/pedagogue categorization, is that it be amenable to discussions of a family's transformation over time. As Knowles (1988b) points out, many families begin homeschooling for one set of reasons but continue for another set of reasons. Homeschooling is a continuous choice; at any time, parents can rethink their decision and choose to send their children to a traditional school. The reason(s) that a family currently chooses to homeschool may differ from those that originally motivated them to undertake this endeavor. Therefore, while my rubric notes their primary impetus, it can also take into account how these motivations have changed over time. For example, a family's initial catalyst for choosing to homeschool may fall into quadrant two, whereas their current reasoning may fall into quadrant one. If we only examined homeschoolers initial or current inducements, the analysis would be incomplete because both provide us with information about the homeschooling decision.

Impact of Exclusion

Homeschooling parents now educate at least one million American children. On this basis alone, educational researchers should take heed. Much of the research cited herein, including that conducted just a decade ago, examined a homeschooling population very different from today=s; that research, even if not outdated, leaves untouched many questions about this form of American education. Yet, direct knowledge of homeschooling -- and direct application of that knowledge to improve homeschooling -- constitutes only one aspect of the reward for enhanced homeschooling scholarship. We have a great deal to learn from such research and an equally large amount to lose from neglecting it.

Parents who choose to homeschool their children view themselves as diverging from mainstream society. They consider their values and beliefs to be incompatible with standard methods of schooling. Their homeschooling decision presents the conviction that they can do a better job teaching their children than a traditional school. Further, many homeschoolers provide powerful critiques of American schooling. Looking at education from the vantage point of a group of people who view traditional schools in a very different light, and who generally have strong and considered ideas about education, provides a context highly conducive to the discussion of how the American education system can fulfill the needs of our pluralistic society.

The enormous growth of homeschooling has now begun to prompt, in states throughout America, consideration of legislative regulations and protections. Given this activity, scholars can greatly assist policy makers by contributing contextualized knowledge, such as information about homeschoolers' concerns and motivations, thus yielding a better understanding of homeschoolers in all their diversity. One body of research questions might, for example, focus on understanding the societal forces that have enabled, even prompted, the present upsurge in homeschooling.[12]

Homeschooling research could also be a benefit to those who seek to improve traditional public school systems, form private schools, or establish alternative educational opportunities such as charter or magnet schools. For instance, such research would likely yield insights into factors

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[12] Certainly, the convergence of two somewhat oppositional trends has played a role in forming this inviting context. The first is a choice-oriented, Neo-Liberal (and Neo-Conservative) trend that seeks market-oriented solutions to public policy problems. The second is an increasing segmentation of the American population. This is seen in a negative way by many in the Neo-Liberal and Neo-Conservative camps – as a breakdown in community. Together, these trends are very hospitable to homeschooling. The first trend favors all choice mechanisms – basically, welcoming any option other than the traditional neighborhood school. However, many of these options (most obviously Catholic Schools) are not well received by those riding the second, individualist trend. These folks seek an education that is unique and specially

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driving parental choice, techniques aimed at individualized instruction, multi-age learning, emulation of role-models and peers, child development and developmentally-appropriate learning, and issues of cultural reproduction and social stratification.

Concerning this latter point, I am personally very interested in the impact that the recent surge, in numbers and diversity, of the homeschooling movement may have on educational equity, access, and democracy. What will become of the communitarian ideal if more and more families decide, as do some – but not all – homeschoolers, to filter society=s voice from their children=s education? Does the increased exercise of a choice to forego formal schools mean more democracy or does it impair democracy? How might the movement toward homeschooling drive policy shifts concerning tax laws and public school funding? These questions await scholarly analyses.

Public school teachers sometimes speak of the "wave theory" of school change: they see a new wave of change coming, and they duck under it, surfacing again only once it has passed. We, as educational researchers, seem to be engaging in a similar exercise regarding homeschooling – except the wave keeps getting larger. The time has come for in-depth study and critical analysis of this movement, its lessons, and its future.

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geared toward their particular children.

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